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JFK ASSASSINATION SYSTEM

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438-3

INTERVIEW AND MEETING SUMMARY

R602

TOP SECRET

INTERVIEW WITH: Bruce Cheever

REGARDING: Assassination Inquiry

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10241

DATE-TIME-LOCATION: July 24, 1975

PRESENT: Paul WALLACH and Joe DiGenova

HAS OR SHOULD BE DIGESTED:

FOLLOW UP REQUIRED:

MATERIAL SUBMITTED BY INTERVIEWEE(S):

EXECUTIVE SESSION: ___YES ___NO

TOP SECRET

FILE:

This morning Joe DiGenova and I interviewed Bruce Cheever at the Carroll Arms. We focused on Cheever's tenure as deputy director of Task Force W.

Background:

1938-43	Marine Corps
1943-44	OSS Parachute School
1944-46	Marine Corps
1950-53	Office Police Coordination; headed Plans Section for Western European Division
1953-56	[redacted]
1956-60	Deputy Chief, European Division
1960-3/62	Headquarters, U. S. European Command (U. S. representative)
3/62-65	Deputy Director: Task Force W
1965-71	[redacted]
1971	Retired from Agency
3/64-2/65	Deputy Chief, Special Operations Branch (developing paramilitary capabilities for Agency)

Apparently selected for Task Force W because of extensive paramilitary background. Not sure whether slotted by Harvey or Helms.

Prior to his Task Force W assignment, Harvey was known to Cheever by reputation only. He described Harvey as one of the finest operatives the Agency ever had, citing Harvey's Berlin tunnel.

Cheever understood that Task Force W was Mongoose's instrument to get rid of the Castro regime; that the Cuban operations had White House backing; and that the Agency had been given an operational carte blanche, with the caveat that each operation had to receive explicit SGA approval <u>prior</u> to getting off the drawing board.

Cheever told us: "You don't pull in fast-rising men like [Ted] Schakley unless you have solid backing." Cheever believes that Lansdale was RFK's representative and that Task Force W would not suggest aggressive covert action to the SGA without Lansdale's approval.

FILE:

Cheever confirmed what we knew about Harvey. Although Cheever worked closely with Harvey, he told us that Harvey was a loner and most surely would not inform him of operations unless he had a "must need to know". In Cheever's opinion, Harvey was one of the great believers in compartmentalization; Cheever "complained that Harvey turned him into his staff man" (as compared to an operational extension). Cheever also told us that Harvey was a two martini man at lunch with thyroid problems; this often "led to problems for Harvey at early afternoon meetings".

Cheever believes he attended at least ten SGA meetings. However, he does not recall RFK, only recalls briefing Bundy. (Maybe Cheever attended other than SGA meetings -- the minutes do not reflect his attendance.)

Cheever met weekly with designees of the SGA principals in Lansdale's office (Messrs. Califano, Haig, Hurwitch, Craig, and Johnson). Cheever would brief these designees on proposed operational plans; discussion of the details would ensue. Subsequent to the staff meetings, the principals would meet and decide whether or not the particular plan would be approved. Cheever did state that the Group often rejected proposals. In one instance, Max Taylor vetoed the maritime infiltration of a small team. Taylor felt that the chances of success were small and attributability great. (Cheever agreed with Taylor -- "but it was one of Lansdale's brain childs.")

Cheever told us that "around the Task Force W shop it was known that the Kennedys wanted to get rid of the Castro regime." In order to get this done, "the Kennedys built a fire under the Agency's tail and installed Lansdale as Chief of Operations". According to Cheever, Lansdale and the SGA were "geared to keeping the Kennedys informed as to what was happening".

However, after the Cuban missile crisis, Cuban operations were not pursued with the same sense of urgency.